a spaniard in the works

John Lennon said, around last Christmastime, that his new book was the usual load of rubbish. But, he added, it didn't cost much, so you couldn't complain.

Well, I don't know whether to lodge a complaint or not. But this is what happened to me . . . all because of J. L. and his new book. I suppose it was all a sort of dream—because I'd been reading the latest Lennon volume. But it was very odd. . . .

I FELL asleep in a public library. Anyone can do it quite legally, provided he possesses a current Borrower's Ticket. I was halfway between Nature Study and Foreign Languages.

I dropped off before you could say "Hemingway" and I dreamed that I was trundling through a big dark forest on my old bicycle and I hadn't the slightest idea where I was going.

Suddenly I came upon a clearing in the trees and managed to grip the bike brakes just in time to avoid colliding with two enormous elephants sitting back to back on the ground. True, I should have seen the sign saying *Beware of the Book Ends* but you don't think of these things when you're cycling in a dark forest, do you? (*Specially when it's all a dream, anyway!*)

The screech of worn brake-blocks on chromium wheel-rims startled one of the elephants who jumped about fifty feet into the air, just like in a Walt Disney cartoon.

As he did so, I noticed for the first time the black and sort-of-red cover of a book he'd been supporting. (*How mad can you get?*) The bloke in a sort-of-red cloak and a wide-brimmed Spanish hat, bent forward from the cover and picked up a mighty spanner off the ground.

"That happens every time some soft cyclist pulls up here in a hurry," he muttered. "That jumbo is highly strung. A screech of brakes and he panics. Leaps off into the forest. And I drop me spanner. Happens every time. By the way, what are you staring at?"

I couldn't believe my eyes. It was John Lennon. (*Not surprising, really. I'm a great Lennon-ist and so I expect I do sometimes dream about him.*)

For a moment I was speechless. "Is it . . . ?" I stammered.

"Yes, it is. But I don't look a bit like him, do I?"

"No, well, you wouldn't with that sort-of-red cloak and the hat and everything, would you?"

"Course not. Coming in for a few minutes then? The place isn't finished yet. Still got the printers in and there's brown and green ink everywhere. Wipe your bicycle on the dust jacket."

It was rather like Alice in Wonderland—and what a mad, mad, mad, etc., world. I stepped into the first page of this sort-of-red book . . . and glanced at a thin brown Lennonism which had a tail, four long legs with funny, hen-type feet, a well-developed head with National Health specs slung about its eyes and an ear which looked like a cross between a pansy and a mushroom. (*I love John's drawings.*)

Cautiously, lest I be set upon by some less tame, less friendly Lennon cartoon figure, I turned the next page. JOHN LENNON: A SPANIARD IN THE WORKS,* said the big writing.

I turned again and came across a very long Lennonist drawing bending low across two full pages. Two legs, thin stooping neck and unhappy little face with one green eye. DESIGN: ROBERT FREEMAN, it said beside his lips. Only one brief page later the same Lennonism had put on a fantastic amount of weight and grown two extra feet plus an additional eye which was balanced very carefully on his nose. DRAWINGS: JOHN LENNON, it said beside his lips.

So my way-out dream continued. . . .

"Don't dither about," said a sort-of-green octopus on page 11. "There are all kinds of interesting people to meet further on." The page 11 Lennonism did not exaggerate.

Between pages 13 and 93 I encountered more than thirty other hand-drawn brown and/or green Lennonisms, plus eighteen full-length poems, essays or other collections of words.

The fascinating characters I was introduced to were far too numerous to list here. Although I feel you might be particularly interested in Oxo Whitney, Sydnees Aspinall, Araminta Ditch (*who has green hair and green toenails and is always larfing, gurgling, etc.*), Silly Norman, Mr. Boris Morris and Miss Pearl Staines, Barrold Reginald Bunker-Harquart and Old Nanny Harriette. Each of these people inhabit one or other of the book's eighteen tales.

The eighteen tales carry titles which must be minor works of art in themselves. I mean, who but John ("Spaniard In The Works") Lennon could create such headings as *Snore Wife And Several Dwarts, The Fat Budgie, The Singularge Experience Of Miss Anne Duffield, Benjaman Distasteful, The National Health Cow, Readers Lettuce* and *Our Dad*.

By the time I staggered round the corner from pages 91 to 92 I was ready for anything. The weirdest of green and brown Lennonisms couldn't have frightened me now. In fact there was nothing to worry about, for the pair of brown Lennonisms on the final pages looked comparatively human. One rather plump one sat on his brown chair and scowled down at a slightly thinner one who was kneeling low in silent homage at the stout Lennonism's feet.

That's when I woke up . . . disturbed by some inconsiderate idiot who was searching for a book on Nature Study. Of course I left the old bicycle behind (hiding beneath some pure-white sheep-like Lennonisms in a meadow which spreads across pages 74 and 75, I think) but that doesn't matter very much.

What worries me is that it couldn't have been an ordinary dream. Because I have this spanner which belongs on the front cover in John Lennon's black-gloved fist. I must return it somehow. After all, *SPANIARD IN THE WORKS* is due to be published on 24th June, and somebody's going to notice the missing spanner sooner or later.

For this reason I have spent the last two-and-a-half weeks kipping halfway between Nature Study and Foreign Languages in our public library, in an attempt to dream my way back to that "Beware Of The Book Ends" sign. If anybody thinks he knows of a better library for this sort of thing, he'd better let me know as soon as possible.

JACK ROGER.

** "A SPANIARD IN THE WORKS," by JOHN LENNON, will be published at 10s. 6d. by JONATHAN CAPE, on Thursday, 24th June, 1965.*

SONGBOOK STOP FREE NEXT WEEK STOP FAB